

8 Leadership Archetypes Every Chief of Staff Must Master

The Benadom CoS Framework

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01

The Commander

"I know exactly what needs to happen. I just need everyone else to catch up."

High energy, high demand

This leader has strong opinions about everything — the strategy, the process, the font on the slide deck. They move fast, decide quickly, and expect the people around them to execute without needing their hand held.

WHAT YOU'LL NOTICE

- Every decision routes back to them
- Meetings move fast but rarely close
- The team is talented but underutilized
- They interrupt — often with the right answer
- Energy is high; follow-through is patchy

WHAT THEY NEED

- A filter — not everything needs their eyes
- Someone who can pre-decide at their standard
- Honest pushback they didn't ask for
- A way to slow down without feeling slow
- Visibility into what their team actually thinks

WHAT NOT TO DO

- Don't become another yes-voice
- Don't escalate everything
- Don't protect the team from their intensity
- Don't compete for the floor
- Don't confuse confidence with certainty

THE CoS MOVE

Build a decision filter together — a written set of criteria for what requires their attention and what doesn't.

02

The Architect

"I hired great people. My job is to get out of their way."

High trust, high accountability

This leader builds deliberately. They recruit well, delegate clearly, and operate with a calm confidence.

WHAT YOU'LL NOTICE

- Decisions happen at the right level
- The team operates with real autonomy
- They ask questions more than they direct
- They notice everything, comment on little
- Accountability is quiet but absolute

WHAT THEY NEED

- Someone who sees across the whole field
- Early signals when something is drifting
- Pattern recognition they don't have time for

- Honest synthesis — not flattering summaries
- A thought partner, not just an executor

WHAT NOT TO DO

- Don't create problems to solve
- Don't over-report
- Don't assume silence means approval
- Don't mistake calm for disengagement
- Don't try to be the smartest in the room

THE CoS MOVE

Develop your own strong point of view and learn to articulate it clearly.

03

The Chessmaster

"Every conversation is a move. Every relationship is a position on the board."

Highly complex — proceed with clarity

This leader plays politics not because they're malicious, but because they've learned it works. They are strategic about information.

WHAT YOU'LL NOTICE

- Information is curated, not shared freely
- Alliances shift depending on the initiative
- They read people faster than most
- The 'official' and real versions differ
- The team is loyal — or very quiet

WHAT THEY NEED

- Someone they can trust completely
- Honest intelligence they can't get elsewhere
- A CoS who doesn't play the game
- Gentle reality checks without ego
- Someone who protects culture quietly

WHAT NOT TO DO

- Don't become a conduit for political messaging
- Don't share what you know with everyone
- Don't pick sides
- Don't mistake being trusted with being safe
- Don't normalize what isn't okay

THE CoS MOVE

Be the one person in their orbit who is genuinely non-political.

04

The Phantom

"I was just in London. And Singapore before that. I'm back Thursday — or maybe Friday."

Structurally difficult — demands discipline

The Phantom swoops in and swoops out. They're present in the way a weather event is present — intensely, briefly, and with significant aftermath.

WHAT YOU'LL NOTICE

- Calendar is chaotic; priorities shift
- Team makes decisions in their absence
- They re-engage at high energy, then disappear
- No one is sure what they own
- CoS becomes de facto leader

WHAT THEY NEED

- A system that keeps them connected
- A reliable brief when they re-enter
- Someone managing commitments in their absence

- Decisions escalated only when necessary
- An honest conversation about their absence

WHAT NOT TO DO

- Don't fill the vacuum with your authority
- Don't shield the team from reality
- Don't make your case when they first re-engage
- Don't manage up in a way that embarrasses them
- Don't carry the organization alone

THE CoS MOVE

Design a re-entry ritual — a standing brief that takes them from zero to informed in ten minutes.

05

The Quiet Force

"They don't say much in the meeting. But afterward, everything moves."

Low friction, high depth

This leader does extraordinary things and never craves the attention for it. They're not performing leadership — they're practicing it.

WHAT YOU'LL NOTICE

- They listen more than they speak
- They dislike self-promotion intensely
- Their relationships are deep and mutual
- They rarely ask for recognition
- Their team is fiercely loyal

WHAT THEY NEED

- Someone to make their impact legible
- A CoS who amplifies without distorting
- Help structuring for external audiences
- Preparation for rooms that require performance
- Protection from those who confuse quiet with weak

WHAT NOT TO DO

- Don't push them to be louder
- Don't take credit for the space they create
- Don't mistake their softness for a limit
- Don't make introversion a problem to fix
- Don't assume they need rescuing

THE CoS MOVE

Become their voice in the rooms they don't need to be in.

06

The Blueprint

"There's a right way to do this. Let's document it, version it, and not deviate."

Structured — requires patience and precision

Process is not a tool for this leader — it's a value. They believe deeply that rigor is respect.

WHAT YOU'LL NOTICE

- Everything has a process
- Ambiguity makes them uncomfortable
- They want documentation before decisions
- Deviation from process is serious
- They're often right when others improvise

WHAT THEY NEED

- Total follow-through on every commitment
- A CoS who builds systems, not workarounds
- Early warning when something breaks protocol

- Help translating ambiguity into structure
- A safe person to be imperfect with

WHAT NOT TO DO

- Don't improvise and tell them later
- Don't present a problem without a process
- Don't confuse rigidity with stubbornness
- Don't be vague — ever
- Don't rush them when speed isn't needed

THE CoS MOVE

Learn to love a framework — and become the person who builds them.

07

The Catalyst

"Everything is possible. Why are we not moving faster? Let's do all of it."

Energizing but combustible

The Catalyst generates ideas at a rate the organization can't consume. The CoS is essentially a landing system.

WHAT YOU'LL NOTICE

- Priorities change — often mid-sentence
- Energy is genuinely electric
- Team is inspired and slightly overwhelmed
- Brilliant ideas arrive without plans
- Boredom is their kryptonite

WHAT THEY NEED

- An idea triage system
- Someone who translates vision into scope
- Consistent follow-through
- Diplomatic honesty about capacity
- Protection from their own enthusiasm

WHAT NOT TO DO

- Don't shut down ideas in real time
- Don't let every idea derail priorities
- Don't match energy without adding structure
- Don't mistake activity for progress
- Don't forget to celebrate what shipped

THE CoS MOVE

Create an 'idea inventory' — a living document where every idea gets captured and categorized.

08

The Mirror

"Tell me what you think. (They mean: tell me what I already think, beautifully.)"

Deceptively difficult — requires courage

The Mirror believes they want honest input. They've built a team that reflects their thinking back to them.

WHAT YOU'LL NOTICE

- Team agrees more than they should
- Bad news arrives late or softened
- They reference their own past statements
- Honest voices have quietly left
- They are often unaware of this

WHAT THEY NEED

- A trusted channel for unfiltered info
- Someone who disagrees consistently
- Real data, framed with care

- A way to hear what the team thinks
- Someone honest enough to value the relationship

WHAT NOT TO DO

- Don't become the echo chamber
- Don't deliver hard truths publicly
- Don't confuse loyalty with agreement
- Don't wait until stakes are enormous
- Don't mistake warmth for permission

THE CoS MOVE

Develop a private debrief ritual after major decisions.

The CoS who studies their leader without studying themselves is only doing half the work.

The Benadom CoS Framework is not a fixed taxonomy. It's a starting point. Your leader will shift between archetypes depending on the season, the stakes, and what's happening at home.

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